



News Release

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Mississippi Valley Division/
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cemvd-pa@mvd02.usace.army.mil

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Contact: Public Affairs Office

Phone: 601-634-5760

Study to Restore Ecosystem and Improve Navigation on Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway Nears Completion

VICKSBURG, MISS, September 28, 2004 -- The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, completed today their final plan for future ecosystem restoration and navigation efficiency improvements to the Upper Mississippi and Illinois rivers.

The recommended plan presented in the Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study establishes a framework for modifications and operational changes to ensure environmental sustainability and navigation efficiencies. The framework provides an adaptive and integrated approach to manage the navigation and ecological systems of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois rivers.

The report, signed by Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, commanding general, Mississippi Valley Division, formally submits the study to Corps headquarters for approval and potential submission to the administration and Congress.

"This has been a collaborative effort by federal, state and non-government interests, as well as the public, to bring the report to this next level in the process," said Crear. "It has been a long journey to get to the point of addressing numerous requirements and providing clear balance, and I am proud of the efforts of all involved. We believe our recommendations will ensure these rivers remain a national treasure for generations to come."

The recommended 50-year framework plan includes a \$5.3 billion first cost long-term framework for ecosystem restoration, and a \$2.4 billion first-cost long-term framework for navigation efficiency improvements. An initial increment of the framework plan is recommended for immediate authorization.

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The initial increment of the recommended navigation improvement plan consists of small-scale structural and nonstructural measures and the construction of seven new 1,200-foot locks with a cost of \$1.88 billion. The initial increment of ecosystem restoration consists of an estimated 225 projects with a combined cost of \$1.462 billion. The plan will be implemented through an adaptive implementation strategy including periodic checkpoints requiring future reporting to the Administration and Congress.

“The plan seeks to restore the riverine ecosystem and improve the efficiency of the navigation system,” said Crear. “Its goal is to ensure the waterway system continues to be a nationally treasured ecological resource as well as an efficient national transportation system.”

The last step in completing the study is a Report of the Chief of Engineers signed by the Corps’ Commanding General, Lt. Gen. Carl Strock. The report, projected for November 2004, will contain final Corps recommendations for review by the administration and potential submission to congress.

The National Research Council has reviewed the draft report and is nearing completion of its report. The NRC report was not available when the Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement was submitted for publication (23 Sept 2004), therefore, response to the NRC report will be included in the Report of the Chief of Engineers. The Corps contracted with the NRC to provide an independent review of the study.

The continued analysis, review and reporting requirements allows the Corps to offer the most current information and the greatest flexibility to congress and the administration to properly budget, fund, and respond, including delaying or halting project components.

The Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway System Navigation Feasibility Study is available on the web at <http://www2.mvr.usace.army.mil/umr-iwwsns/>.



Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, MVD Commander, signs the Division Commander's Notice of Decision.